

Submission F001 (Vincent Mammano, Federal Highway Administration, November 22, 2011)



U.S. Department
of Transportation
**Federal Highway
Administration**

California Division
November 18, 2011

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In Reply Refer To:
CHST-Fresno to Bakersfield

Mr. Dan Leavitt
Deputy Director
Fresno to Bakersfield Draft EIR/EIS Comment
770 L Street, Suite 800
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Mr. Leavitt:

We have taken a cursory review of the Draft Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement (EIR/EIS) entitled "Fresno to Bakersfield Section of the California High-Speed Train Project" (Project). The document is a Tier 2 EIS for purposes of complying with the National Environmental Policy Act and would be located in portions of Fresno, Kings, Tulare and Kern Counties.

The Federal Highway Administration's primary concern is the effects the Project would have on the State highway system, in particular, State Route 99. The document indicates that all crossings will be grade-separated, which will be essential for efficient functionality and retaining the integrity of surface transportation modes. As detail is available, additional comments include:

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|--------|---|
| F001-1 | 1. Provide information on the distance of any barriers (protecting rails from errant vehicles) from the traveled way if tracks are at grade within the existing right of way; |
| F001-2 | 2. Ensure that proposed or future widening/improvements to the highway are not compromised, if tracks or columns are located within the highway right of way; this includes assurance of adequate vertical clearance; |
| F001-3 | 3. Identify locations and methods for maintenance access; |
| F001-4 | 4. Specific highway interchange impacts, including, but not limited to, locations of high speed rail parking lots/garages, columns for grade separation, frontage roads, etc.; and |
| F001-5 | 5. Locations of potential high speed rail crossovers of State Route 99 with individual diagrams in the main text. |

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We appreciate the opportunity to comment on the draft EIR/EIS and look forward to the production and receipt of the final document.

If you have any questions, please contact Larry Vinzant at (916) 498-5040 or email lvinzant@dot.gov.

Sincerely,

For
Vincent P. Mammano
Division Administrator

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Submission F001 (Vincent Mammano, Federal Highway Administration, November 22, 2011) - Continued

Cc:
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Response to Submission F001 (Vincent Mammano, Federal Highway Administration, November 22, 2011)

F001-1

Regarding potential project impacts on State Route 99, the California High-Speed Rail Authority has adopted the following approach. Proposed highway barriers would typically be placed at the back of the proposed roadway shoulders. For locations where roadways are transverse to the high-speed rail, the Authority will follow the Caltrans Highway Design Manual, Section 309, "High Speed Rail Clearances" (Caltrans 2012b). When a high-speed rail corridor is to be constructed longitudinally to a freeway, expressway, or a conventional highway with posted speeds of over 40 miles per hour, the nearest fixed object or feature associated with the operation of the rail facility should be a minimum of 52 feet horizontally from the planned ultimate edge of the traveled way (see Index 62.10 for the definition of high-speed rail [Caltrans 2012b]). The terrain and the required highway features between the edge of the traveled way and the rail facility to be constructed must be evaluated on a case-by-case basis to determine whether the shielding behind the guardrail, barrier, or other safety device is in conformance with the guidance found in Chapter 7 of the Highway Design Manual (Caltrans 2012b). For input on the need for shielding at a specific location, consult District Traffic Operations.

F001-2

2. The HST overcrossings have been planned to accommodate widening or future projects that have been currently identified.

F001-3

In the Fresno to Bakersfield Section, the HST would span over SR 99 at E. North Avenue in Fresno and between the Carrier Canal and California Avenue in Bakersfield. Piers for the spans would not encroach on the SR 99 right-of-way. In Fresno, the bottom of the HST structure would be at least 20 feet over SR 99 and its ramps. In Bakersfield, the clearance between the bottom of the HST structure and SR 99 would be a minimum of 16.5 feet. Therefore, the HST project would not interfere with maintenance access or maintenance activities on the highway.

F001-4

Item 4: The traffic analysis performed for the EIR/EIS has included a full build-out scenario (stations, parking garages, etc.) and future traffic projections. The needed mitigation measures have been identified in the document.

F001-5

Item 5: The HST project crosses State Route 99 once in the southern part of Fresno and once in Bakersfield (all three alignment alternatives). Both crossings are on a viaduct and the locations and drawings are provided in Volume III of the EIR/EIS.

